

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 011633Z DEC 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6198
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 5528

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 6)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, ES, PINT, SHUM
SUBJECT: LEADERSHIP OF PDC INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER GNERAL
SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR

SUMMARY. TOP LEADERS OF EL SALVADOR'S CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC
PART (PDC) REQUESTED MEETING WITH EMBOFFS NOV. 29. MAJOR
POINTS OF CONCERN WERE: (A) PRECARIOUS POSITION OF PRESIDENT
ROMERO WITH PDC WISHING FOR SOME TYPE OF ACCORD OR DIALOGUE
BUT NOT SATISFIED WITH PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE; (B) PDC WOULD LIKE
TO LOOSEN OR EVEN BREAK AWAY FROM CURRENT ALLIANCE IN UNO
(MRN AND UDN) BUT FEELS PARTY IN TOO WEAK A POSITION TO MAKE
BREAK AT THIS JUNCTURE; (B) CONCERN ABOUT RECENTLY PASSED LAW
OF PUBLIC ORDER AND POSSIBLE USAGE BY GOES; (D) FEELS ATTITUDE
OF CATHOLIC CHURNN TOWARDS PRESIDENT ROMERO NOT HELPING
CURRENT SITUATION; AND FINALLY, (E) EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT U.S.
POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS MAY HAVE CHANGED IN RECENT WEEKS. END SUMMARY.
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1. TWO MOST IMPORTANT LEADERS OF PDC IN EL SALVADOR,
REY PRENDES AND FIDEL CHAVEZ, REQUESTED MEETING WITH
EMBOFFS NOV. 29. WIDE-RANGING THREE HOUR DISCUSSION
COVERING MOST ASPECTS OF CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION
AND PROBLEMS FACING BOTH PRESIDENT ROMERO AND PDC.

2. IN DISCUSSION OF NEW LAW OF PUBLIC ORDER, BOTH PDC LEADERS EXPRESSED GREAT CONCERN THAT WHILE LAW IN ITSELF NOT ENTIRELY UNREASONABLE, POTENTIAL EXISTS FOR APPLICATION OF LAW IN MANNER THAT WOULD BE COMPLETELY REPRESSIVE IN NATURE AND CLOSE OUT ALL LEGITIMATE POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO GOES.

3. PDC EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT U.S. POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AS APPLIED IN EL SALVADOR HAS UNDERGONE CHANGE. BASE THIS CONCERN ON CHANGED PERSONNEL IN EMBASSY INCLUDING AMBASSADOR AND RECENT SUPPORT FOR ROMERO GOVERNMENT SUCH AS SAN LORENZO LOAN AND OTHER MATTERS. EMBOFFS ASSURED THEM NO CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS BUT RATHER SOME EVIDENCE OF CHANGE IN POLICY OF GOES AND PRESIDENT'S EXPRESSED DESIRE TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE IN EL SALVADOR.

4. PDC ANALYSIS OF ROMERO SITUATION: UNDER PRESSURE FROM THREE DIFFERENT GROUPS--GENUINE TERRORISTS, "PHONY TERRORISTS" (CHACON GROUP) AND FASCIST MILITARY AND PRIAVE SECTOR ALLIES. THEIR COMMON PURPOSE IS TO PROVOKE SEVERE REPRESSION.

5. PDC SITUATION. PART NOW IN WEAK POSITION AND SEES ITSELF IN SAME BOAT AS ROMERO. CLOSURE OF ELECTORAIL ROUTE TO CHANGE WILL STRENGTHEN EXTREME LEFT (BPR-FPL) AT EXPENSE OF PDC, AS WILL RETURN TO REPRESSION, EITHER THROUGH CHANGE OF POLICY BY ROMERO OR HIS REPLACEMENT BY RIGHT-WING COUP.
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6. PDC WANTS TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH ROMERO ON POLITICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RETURN TO FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY. FIRST STAGE IS AGREEMENT WITH ROMERO ON GENERAL POLITICAL LINE TO BE FOLLOWED--WHERE IS THE COUNTRY GOING OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. THEN, DETAILED ACTIONS CAN BE WORKED OUT. AFTER AGREEMENT ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES, IT IS UP TO PRESIDENT TO TAKE DRAMATIC ACTION TO ASSURE PDC THAT THERE IS SOMETHING FOR IT IN PARTICIPATING IN ELECTIONS. OTHERWISE, PDC LEADERSHIP WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONVINCE RANK AND FILE.

7. ALTHOUGH SEVERAL MEETINGS HAVE BEEN HELD, NO RESULTS HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED. LAST MEETING WAS FOUR WEEKS AGO. ROMERO PROMISED PARTIES THAT INVITATION FROM MINISTER OF INTERIOR WOULD BE FORTHCOMING TO DISCUSS CHANGES IN ELECTORAL MECHANISM. FOR PDC, CHANGE IN CURRENT MAKEUP OF CONSEJO CENTRAL DE ELECCIONES IS ESSENTIAL TO PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS. NO INVITATION HAS BEEN FORTHCOMING. TIME IS VERY SHORT. ONCE INTO CHRISTMAS, NO ONE WILL DO ANYTHING, AND IT WILL BE TOO LATE FOR PDC AND OTHER PARTIES TO GEAR UP FOR ELECTIONS. THEY FEEL CHANCES FOR PDC PARITCIPATION IN MARCH 1978 ELECTIONS AT BEST, MINIMAL.

8. PDC CLEARLY WOULD LIKE TO LOOSEN ITS ALLIANCE WITH ITS COALITION PARTNERS MNR AND UDN. THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT RECOVERING THEIR OWN IMAGE AS A PARTY AND FEAR THAT PARTNERS, PARTICULARLY UDN, MAY PREJUDICE CHANCES FOR RECONCILIATION WITH ROMERO. MEETING OF COALITION LEADERS SCHEDULED NOV. 30, PRIOR TO PDC REQUEST FOR NEW APPOINTMENT WITH PRESIDENT.

9. PDC CONCERNED ABOUT INTRANSIGENT ATTITUDE OF CHURCH. BELIEVE THAT ARCHBISHOP MAY HAVE NO POLITICAL SENSE. THINK CHURCH'S PRE-CONDITIONS TO DIALOGUE ARE TOO TOUGH. SPECULATE THAT CHURCH MAY FEAR LOSS OF INFLUENCE OVER CAMPESINADO IF IT SOFTENS ITS STAND. BELIEVE GOVERNMENT STRATEGY IS TO PROMOTE DISSENSION WITHIN CHURCH. SEE POSSIBLE ROLE FOR PDC IN BRIDGING GAP BETWEEN ROMERO AND CHURCH.
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10. COMMENT. IMPRESSION IS THAT PDC LEADERSHIP IS ANXIOUS TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH ROMERO BUT WILL HAVE DIFFICULT JOB CONVINCING MORE HARD-LINE ELEMENTS WITHIN PARTY OF HIS SINCERITY AND ARE AFRAID TO LEND CREDENCE TO PRESENT REGIME BY PARTICIPATING IN 1978 ELECTIONS. THEY APPEAR PUZZLED AND DISAPPOINTED THAT PRESIDENT HAS NOT FOLLOWED UP HIS WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH ANY CONCRETE ACTIONS. THEY SPECULATE THAT EITHER THE POLITICAL ADVICE HE IS GETTING IS POOR OR THAT, ASSURED OF THE SOUNDNESS OF HIS MILITARY SUPPORT, THE PRESIDENT IS WILLING TO TOUGH IT OUT ON HIS CURRENT LINE INDEFINITELY, LETTING THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT DO WHAT THEY WILL. EMBOFFS THROUGHOUT CONVERSATION STRESSED IMPORTANCE TO U.S. OF NO RETROGRESSION IN IMPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE AND HOPEFULLY MOVEMENT TOWARD INCREASED DEMOCRATICIZATION, TRYING TO INJECT IDEA THAT IT WOULD NOT BE GOOD FOR PDC TO MAKE ITS PRICE FOR PARTICIPATION IN ELECTIONS IMPOSSIBLY HIGH. PDC INDICATED AGREEMENT THAT PROCESS WOULD HAVE TO BE GRADUAL AND THEY WOULD ATTEMPT TO CONTINUE DIALOGUE WITH PRESIDENT ALONG THESE LINES. ROMERO'S REACTION AND ACTIONS WILL PROBABLY DETERMINE FUTURE COURSE FOR PDC.

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SHUM, ES, PDC
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